



## **CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**

### **Meeting Minutes #689**

**May 11, 2006**



**Chairman Vernon Chong**  
**Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman**  
**Leo P. Burke, Board Member**

**Jake I. Alarid, Board Member**  
**Alice Astafan, Board Member**  
**Colin Shadell, Board Member**

The California Veterans Board met at Veterans Memorial Building, Pismo Beach, California at 3:00 p.m.

#### **1. ROLL CALL**

Present: Board Members Vernon Chong, Chairman, Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman, Jake I. Alarid, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Leo P. Burke, Member, Colin Shadell, Member, Howell Jackson, Special Counsel to the Board

Absent: None

Chairman Chong presided

#### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Randal Bressette, Pledge of Allegiance

#### **3. WELCOMING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced the Board Members.

#### **4. APPEALS: Review of Record on Appeal of William Bry and Darres Munds.**

Howell Jackson was introduced by Chairman Chong to discuss the appeals of William Bry and Darres Munds. Mr. Jackson summarized Mr. Bry's case in that Mr. Bry's son applied for Veterans Dependents Educational Benefits college fee tuition waiver for the semester previous to receiving his father's disability rating, and it was denied due to the law not paying a fee waiver for a prior academic year. The matter is being continued. The second appeal is of Mr. Munds who applied for admission into the Yountville Veterans Home over a year ago and was denied admission twice. He has filed an appeal to the Board. The Veterans Home is now stating they are in the process of reviewing his application. His appeal is based on the two previous denials from the Veterans Home.

#### **5. CLOSED SESSION**

##### **ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISIONS**

A continuance was decided for Mr. Bry so that Chief Counsel has time to ask for reimbursement for the student. The Board has granted the appeal of Mr. Munds and directed the Yountville Veterans Home to admit Mr. Munds.

#### **6. BOARD DISCUSSION**

##### **Orientation, Training, Goals, Objectives, and Expectations**

Chairman Chong opened up the discussion regarding orientation, training, goals, objectives, and expectations and gave the Board copies of the last annual report showing the revised Mission Statement, goals and objections from 2005, and a list of what the Board's responsibilities are, as well as what they have accomplished during 2005.

Mr. Bressette spoke about the Department's Strategic Plan for 2004-2008. The Board may want to consider incorporating the Department's policies and procedures in the future. He felt that they need to readdress what their mission is and then decide practically what they can accomplish. He would like to see how they could

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help Veterans by supporting charitable endeavors benefiting them. Chairman Chong didn't think it would be beneficial to reshape the Mission Statement at this time and suggested Mr. Bressette draft a new Mission Statement that Board members can review at a later date. Ms. Astafan stated that they need a vision, then a Mission Statement, then goals and objectives, and they need to be measurable.

Chairman Chong stated for this session he would like to address the schedule of meetings with locations and committee formation. He stated that meetings will be held in Barstow in July, in Sacramento in August, in West Los Angeles in September, in Chula Vista in October, no meeting in November, and at Yountville in December. He would like to have the meetings held in one of the three veteran's nursing homes on a bi-monthly basis with the leeway of setting up meetings in other locations for appeals based on where appellants are located as needed. Ms. Astafan suggested making a three-year calendar in order to incorporate locations throughout the State.

Mr. Bressette said that the current committee structure is awkward. Ms. Astafan stated that a Mission Statement, or purpose of the committee, should to be specified, i.e., what the committee will be responsible for and how it will be measured.

Mr. Jackson stated that there is a Board policy that requires that all contracts entered into by the Department in excess of \$250,000 will be reviewed by the Board. Mr. Jackson stated that the Board needs to look at the law, because its function is hearing appeals and the Board shall determine policies for all operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Bressette suggested the creation of a committee of Policy and Oversight to combine Policies and Procedures, Veterans Services, Farm and Home, the CalVet Interest Rates, Contract Review, and California Cemetery into one committee, and add to that the oversight of the Department in the policies that are drafted; to retain an Appeals Committee and create an Administrative Committee to deal with the Veterans Board Budget, the Annual Report and Audit, Interest Rates, and Life and Disability Insurance Committee. There should be a committee for Veterans Homes due to the construction of future homes, and create a Charitable Committee to work with the Veterans' organizations. Chairman Chong asked for clarification regarding the number of members on a committee. Mr. Jackson stated that there can only be two members on each committee due to the amount of members on the Board and the Bagley, Keene Act. Committees will be decided upon in the near future.

It was decided that a goal of the Board will be to have more information available to all veterans regarding when and where Board meetings will be and to have more communication for veterans in order to educate them as to what the Board's function is and how they can help veterans.

Mr. Bressette suggested moving public comments at the Board meetings to the beginning for those who can't stay. This will encourage more open discussion. Open discussion is allowed for three minutes per person for a total of 30 minutes but can be continued by the chairman if necessary.

Mr. Bressette asked Mr. Jackson about the rules of AB 1234. Mr. Jackson will report back on the rules.

**ADJOURNED AT 6:15 P.M.**



## **CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**

**Meeting Minutes #689**

**May 12, 2006**



**Chairman Vernon Chong**  
**Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman**  
**Leo P. Burke, Board Member**

**Jake I. Alarid, Board Member**  
**Alice Astafan, Board Member**  
**Colin Shadell, Board Member**

The California Veterans Board met at Veterans Memorial Building, Pismo Beach, California at 9:00 a.m.

### **1. ROLL CALL**

Present: Board Members Vernon Chong, Chairman, Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman, Jake I. Alarid, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Leo P. Burke, Member, Colin Shadell, Member

Absent: None

Chairman Chong presided

### **2. OPENING CEREMONIES**

- A) INVOCATION**
- B) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- C) OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIR**

### **3. WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. He introduced the members of the Board and provided background on each Board member. He announced that their Executive Officer Sandra Munoz tendered her resignation three weeks ago, and they are currently looking for a new Executive Officer. Kitty Rollins will assist as Executive Officer for the meeting today. Chairman Chong introduced Mr. Tom Johnson, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the State of California.

Mr. Johnson started by welcoming Mr. Shadell as the representative from the Veterans Homes and read a letter of congratulations. He introduced Deputy Secretary and Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson. He spoke of the Hire a Hero event in Hanford which joins newly returning service people with businesses at a job fair.

### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Galvin  
Nancy Lee Jackson  
John Borders  
David Salopek  
John F. Smith  
Leigh Willard  
Mary Caruthers  
Milton Batson

Stephen Champeau  
Ashley White  
Ed Tedeschi

## **5. SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

### **A) Capitol Area Development Authority Proposal:**

Mr. Johnson referred to the Capitol Area Development Authority MOU. He pointed out that the Farm and Home Department, under the State of California, owns and manages a parking lot located across from the building on 1227 O Street. Within the context of this property they have discovered that DGS and CADA are charged with developing additional housing within this block to respond to the directives of the Capitol Area Plan, which is the official master plan for state owned property in the capitol area. The capitol area plan suggests that future development of the block across the street from their building include denser housing use. They have entered into an MOU for a feasibility study to be conducted on behalf of CADA and University of California. There are no preliminary reports and no financial data yet but he will keep the Board informed as they have information.

B) Strategic Growth Plan: The Governor, with the Democratic and Republican leadership, forged a strategic growth plan of 37.8 billion dollars which will go before the Electorate in November for decision. This program involves monies for many different programs, including home ownership for military veterans, and housing for chronic homeless veterans.

C) May Revise: The final Governor's budget will be presented to the Legislature for review today. There is 7.5 billion dollars more than they anticipate in a two-year span. Most of that money is coming from capital gains, one-time revenue. This money will go to fully fund the schools, to retire some debt, to add to the reserves, and to prepay some expenses.

D) With regard to the Department's specific budget, the food budget in Yountville has been increased in the budget to about \$5.75 daily per resident. Workers' compensation at Barstow peaked two years ago to the amount of money that was being spent for workers' compensation claims and resulted in about 15 percent of payroll. The State average is 6 percent. There is a request for a supplemental approval of \$1.3 million for Barstow and next year they have \$975,000 in the budget. An additional \$20,000, has been approved for the Northern Veterans Cemetery operation. Mr. Johnson attended a meeting with Congressman Farr and explained the State's position regarding new construction of Veterans cemeteries. The State is not open to supporting any new programs due to the deficit. It is fiscally the Federal Government's responsibility for building new Federal cemeteries. A compliance coordinator at headquarters is in the budget as well. There is \$3.76 million in the budget for the Dementia Unit at Yountville. There is \$366,000 in the budget for staffing at Yountville which will allow for additional veterans to come into Unit 1-A and 1-B. An additional \$250,000 is in the budget for the Veterans Benefit Outreach. There was another 1.2 million dollars added for the County Veterans' Service Officers from the Assembly Committee, and \$50,000 for a pilot project working with a veterans service organization on additional outreach efforts. Further projects include increasing the intermediate care facility at Barstow and staffing adjustment for nursing. In the area of behavioral wellness, the budget includes \$992,000 for additional mental health professionals. There is money in the budget for nursing scholarships. Also, \$421,000 will be added to the budget for Meditech support for equipment refresh and a feasibility study for the system-wide implementation of Vista. The pharmacy issue is still pending due to the increase of drug costs.

Mr. Alarid asked if the Department can work on some kind of PR for getting pertinent information out to the veterans' organizations, as well as the veterans themselves. Mr. Johnson mentioned that the website is available and he is open to suggestions, such as a newsletter being distributed through email.

## **6. MINUTES**

Acting Executive Officer, Kitty Rollins

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the minutes of the previous meeting held March 9 and 10, 2006

Board member Bressette moved to approve March 9 and 10, 2006 minutes. Board member Astafan seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Burke, Chong, and Shadell.

NOES: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS**

Chairman Chong said that better public relations and communication is something the Board will be looking at. Special counsel to the Board, with the assistance of Mr. Wilson, Chief Counsel to the Department, has arranged an appointment with staff at the Attorney General's Office

### **Resolution HR 4297**

Chairman Chong read Resolution 4297 into the record. Please refer to the California Veterans Board Meeting Packet for the full resolution.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Board member Bressette moved for adoption of Resolution HR 4297. Board member Astafan seconded.

Discussion: None.

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Burke, Chong, Shadell

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Chairman Chong declared the motion carried.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Proposed Policy**

A) Production of records from the Department: in an effort to formalize the appeals process ask the Department to provide records and certify in a timely manner in order to ensure that appeals are properly recorded, heard, and dispensed with.

B) Mr. Johnson brought up a draft policy that is being reviewed for future meetings which has to do with resident participation in health service plans. In anticipation of adding five new homes, and with changes in the opportunities to plan more fully for expenses prior to retiring, a policy is being proposed to require participation, if eligible in Federal, State, and private health service plans to ensure that the Department receives reimbursement for health care that is provided to residents of the California Veterans Homes. There was a discussion from the Board members regarding many facets of this potential policy.

C) A draft policy related to late applications. This is a policy that would allow for somebody to present a late application that may not have fallen within the guidelines of time required by law, but for which there were extenuating circumstances that may have played into the late application.

Chairman Chong stated that until the committees are formed and it is known who will look at the above, he, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Jackson will review the above information.

Mr. Jackson read a letter announcing his resignation from his pro bono position as Advisory Member of the Board Select Committee on the Policy and Procedure Committee, to be effective 30 days from the date of this letter. Mrs. Jackson read a letter confirming her husband's resignation.

Chairman Chong thanked Mr. Jackson for devoting pro bono time to the Board and expressed his disappointment of his resignation.

Chairman Chong said the next meeting date is in July and it will be held in Barstow.

**ADJOURNED AT 11:45 a.m.**

